

Accession Number A/2

Classification

Date: 22 April 1974 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Place: Evanston 1317-A Pitner

Interview with: Yvonne Davis

Interview by: S.F. Patton

Observations: Interview held in private home. She is wife of Carl Davis. A very informative woman. Purpose of the interview was to gain knowledge of occupations held by Blacks in Evanston upon her arrival in Evanston. The interview continued from the responses of her husband. She is a school teacher.

1 Q. So, the Fifth Ward was broken up

A. Yes. When I moved here the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward extended to Dempster. It included our house; it doesn't anymore.

2 Q. When did you move here

A. 1957

3 Q. Where from

A. Evansville Indiana

4 Q. Do you recollect or know what Carl stated about his family

A. Only his father and mother

5 Q. Can you recall any instances or incidents about which he spoke

A. Not much. About the schools, Carl was correct about the positive aspects of Black students at Evanston Township during earlier times. The Whites had rules and dress codes.

6 Q. When you came here, what were the occupations which most of the Blacks held

A. Basically, skilled domestics. I was constantly amazed; couldn't believe how literate they sounded. They spoke English well and could talk on any subject, just as my friends at college

7 Q. Do you think students now are as well versed

A. No. They are sloppy in language. Oh, the older, domestics spoke without splitting verbs

8 Q. Were the early Blacks working as domestics in Evansville

A. Yes

9 Q. Were they fluent speakers of English,

A. No. the Whites were not as affluent as here; they were less educated. There were factories in Evansville





10 Q. Was there any racial discrimination among the selection of the domestics by the whites

A. Not to my knowledge

11 Q. Was it easier for women to gain employment

A. I believe so. What surprised me was to see men besides women doing inside work. Men were chauffeurs, gardeners, but I saw men washing windows, cleaning house. Work which you thing women would do.

Living in was common; single and couples.

12 Q. Did children live in the house of Whites

A. Yes. The children lived there. A friend of mine told me she use to serve dinner; wash dishes. She went and finished Northwestern. One woman, Barbara Sizemore, Superintendent of Schools for Wa., D.C. area had the same type of childhood

13 Q. Did the Black children have access to the books

A. Yes. They were brought up with White children

14 Q. The Children of Blacks were reared with White children

A. Yes. They lived well. They were treated well. The Whites would take the Black young children along

15 Q. You indicated that several of your friends were reared this way. They were often with the White children, but they washed dishes as well

A. No. One friend---I don't thing she ever had to do dishes etc. She's around 31 years. My other friend had to wash dishes, etc. She's close to 50 years old.

16 Q. Were there any other types of work/workers when you arrived here

A. Yes

17 Q. Do you know of any occupations which existed even before you came here

A. There is a Black printer. Thomas Garnett. WRN 6

18 Q. Any other occupations

A. Carl's grandmother---she was the first Black to own and operate a taxi business. She first had the 2-way radio in Evanston. Everyone else had one-way radios. She was high-minded

19 Q. How many taxis did she own

A. I don't know. She started with one car. When Carl's father took over, there were 12 to 15 cars. He later sold the business. He name it Better Cab.

20 Q. When was it sold

A. Sometime in the 60's





21 Q. Any other Black taxi companies

A. There are 2 now

22 Q. When did they begin business

A. One exist originally in the 60's. Then a split occurred a hassle with major shareholders; other group pulled out and they formed the Best cab co. The other company kept the name Better; they have maroon cars. Carl's father still drives

23 Q. What other businesses or occupations

A. Oh yes. Mr. Bryant of Bryant Realty. This existed around time or shortly before I came. Archie Simmons is in the electro-plating business. He is from Iowa.

When I came I heard of the Robinson family

24 Q. The Robinsons are important business people here

A. Yes

25 Q. Tell me more about the Robinsons

A. Mrs. Robinson, she's in charge. When I came here, Mr and Mrs Robinson did day work. Here is a prime example of White's lifestyle "rubbing off" on them

26 Q. Are they a large family

A. They have a daughter who doesn't work in the business and two sons. All are college graduates. Mrs Robinson may have been born here She's in her 60's.

27 Q. What do they own

A. Robinson Bus Co., Robinson Filling Station, Better Cab. company and they are in the excavating business.

28 Q. They invested well didn't they

A. They profited. But I admire ability as a family to succeed. Mother was the brain, will and drive of family

29 Q. She knew what to do

A. She is active in the Republican party

30 Q. Aren't mof of the affluent White's Republican

A. Yes

31 Q. What about professionals in Evanston

A. See Mrs. Pyant. There were some teachers. I could just about name them all

32 Q. When you came

A. Just About. Some Blacks had political jobs---white-collar. They worked for the Cook County. Ask Mrs. Pyant what Jourdan's job was. There were three or four doctors: Dr. Hill, Tarkington, (deceased), Penn(deceased) and Jacob Fry. This was when I arrived.





- 33 Q. Has the number of doctors changed  
A. No. Those now have replaced those who have died
- 34 Q. Dr. Hill founded the Community Hospital  
A. She and Dr. Garnett and his wife founded the Community Hospital.
- 35 Q. When was this  
A. In the 30's or late 30's
- 36 Q. This was specifically for Blacks  
A. Yes
- 37 Q. Could Blacks go to other hospitals, anywhere  
A. I don't know. By the way, there were grocers---Fleming's Grocer Store, Mr. Flemings store. There was Griffin and Jack Moss who owned stores. These were small neighborhood stores. Flemings was the biggest and best. There was Presley Snackery, sundries. It was family owned. He sold it when he was old.
- 38 Q. Are there Presley's alive today  
A. Some
- 39 Q. Were there any lawyers  
A. Alvin Brooks. He is still here
- 40 Q. Not too many then  
A. No. There were Black owned laundremats. A few neighborhood restaurants existed.
- 41 Q. A few why  
A. Most Black families did not go out
- 42 Q. Why few lawyers  
A. Blacks don't trust other Blacks basically. As it is today. We don't go to Black doctors either
- 43 Q. We  
A. The community. We prefer a White as a doctor. We do have Gatlin, he's Director of the Maternity Center and on Dist. #65 school board.
- 44 Q. Were there any seamstresses  
A. Oh! Black caterers. This was what Mrs. Robinson did before the big businesses. She pulled out of domestic work and went into catering work. There were and are many caterers here
- 45 Q. How long were the caterer businesses existent  
A. I doubt a real long time. Fannie Brooks had a catering business---she's dead now. Effie, her sister-in-law, ran the business for the children and husband of Fannie. She later bought it.





46 Q. What was name of business

A. No original name; just listed under Effie Brooks Caterers

47 Q. Then she's listed in the Yellow Pages under "caterers"

A. No. You won't find her in the telephone book. You look under her husband's name: Fred Brooks. Carl's aunt was the only Black one in the Yellow Pages. It was Alice's \_\_\_\_\_ of Culinary Arts. Its just a word of mouth thing. Pauline Williams is a caterer. She's president of Community Hospital Board.

48 Q. How old are these caterers

A. 50's and 60's. Mrs Childs is into her 70's. I call her on occasion. Alice Little, Carl's aunt, she had a business in Glencoe

49 Q. Why Glenco

A. It's centralized. Coreen Brooks, formerly married to Alvin Brooks is a caterer. Effie is the most creative. She can do it.

50 Q. So caterers were quite prominent

A. Um-humm. A lot of hustling on the side as bartenders for the caterers. The biggest employer of Blacks were the Postal Service, Federal employment---5<sup>th</sup> Army, Great Lakes. Hubbard, Bartlett and Spencer owners somehow associated with the Department of Agriculture on Howard St.

51 Q. Were there any policemen

A. Yes

52 Q. Many

A. Pete Cromer. Andrew Cooper who was a detective. Pete or rather William Cromer---everyone called him Pete, was a patrolman. He never made sargent. He had a college degree; and eventually received a desk job. He retired while he was in his 40's and died two years later. Henry White Jr. is an officer with the Youth Division. His father was an officer also.

53 Q. Is Cooper still alive

A. Yes. He is personnel officer with Sara Lee

54 Q. How old is he

A. Oh, around 50-55 years old

55 Q. Is Henry White's father alive

A. No. Bill Jones was a patrolman

56 Q. He was a patrolman when you arrived here

A. Yes He is retired now Pete Cromer may have made Sargent Henry White Jr., is a school liaison officer. There is an officer in each of the middle schools. There are three middle schools





Captain William Logan is brother-in-law to Marshall Barksdale. Logan's wife and Marshall are brother and sister. Logan's wife is the neice of Peter Cromer

57 Q. What does Marshall Barksdale do

A. He is vice-president at Evanston Bank. His father was a patrolman.

58 Q. Any fireman when you arrived here

A. Yes. Joe Burton. Sam Hicks. Serrells (Pharmacy) As far as I know there are 3---all Captains.

